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Class E 364

Book R 2









THE CHRISTIAN PATRIOT ENCOURAGED.

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A

# DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

FIRST PARISH IN HINGHAM,

ON

FAST DAY,

April 8, 1813.

BY JOSEPH RICHARDSON, A. M.

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### TO THE READER.

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## FAST DISCOURSE.

ISAIAH LIV. 17.

“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper ; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.”

WE have assembled this day to pay a voluntary tribute of fasting, humiliation, and prayer. As we revere the memory and the good old paths of our ancestors, we take sacred pleasure in conforming to their custom of observing a day of fasting. Would to heaven we may appear this day before the holy altar with hearts glowing with the same zeal for the cause of our country. The love of true liberty constituted an essential part of their religion.

A voluntary consecration of a day to God for purposes of religious homage by the citizens of a State is always interesting to the pious mind. No offerings can be so grateful to the sight of heaven, as those of a free and voluntary heart.

The present state of our country makes this occasion unspeakably more interesting and solemn than usual. We are constrained by motives, the most powerful that mortals can feel, to refer our cause to God, and to ask counsel from on high.

But may we not apply to ourselves these consoling words of thine, O God, to thy chosen people? "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer."

In the midst of our fasting and humiliation, these consoling words of the text revive our hearts; "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

This promise to the ancient people of God was in a general sense fulfilled. It had more perfect reference to their cause, than to them as a community. The people as a community, although favorites of heaven, were visited with many reverses and afflictions. Their enemies distressed them, but did not so far prosper as to accomplish their designs.

"Why," saith David referring to the same point, "why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves,

and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying. Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure."

The enemies of a righteous cause will sometimes seem to make progress. But they rise as the maniac climbs the summit of some stupendous precipice, and casts himself down in anguish and despair below the reach of hope. Their glittering weapons will appear so formed as to menace destruction; but in a moment they are broken small as the dust. And even the tongue that rose against the righteous cause, divine justice will condemn. The *heritage* of the servants of the Lord will be maintained as sacred, shielded by the arm of Omnipotence, because their righteousness is according to his pleasure.

The principal object of this discourse will be to bring into view the causes we have for humiliation, and to shew that no weapon formed against us has prospered, and that there are many reasons to believe that God is on the side of our country.

In a general view we ever have cause to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. The ingratitude, the neglect, the disobedience, of which we are frequently guilty, cannot recur to the ingenuous mind without piercing the heart with many painful reflec-

tions. That omniscient eye that has never lost sight of us, for a single instant of our existence, must have marked unnumbered frailties and sins, which, if recollection should bring them clearly into view, in all their turpitude, would draw tears of remorse from the most unfeeling heart.

This day, we trust, God waits upon us to listen to our confessions, and to accept our contrition. May our humiliation before his throne, receive some reviving token of grace, which like a band of love shall bind our heart to the honour of his cause, and be remembered with everlasting gratitude.

In the course of the last year our State has been visited with some tokens of a frowning providence. There has not been so great complaint on account of the scarcity of bread for many years. This judgment has fallen upon our State with great weight. This judgment must be for some other cause than for having taken an active part in the war in which the country is engaged. As a State, no one in the Union has more cautiously avoided all participation in the war, yet this State lies under a heavy judgment, more severe than has been, by an immediate providence, inflicted on any other.

Some parts of this State have been visited by a very alarming and mortal sickness. Has this taken place on account of prosecuting the war, or for our strange love of what is called peace? These to my

mind are very solemn tokens, which require the consideration of an honest conscience.

I believe there is no State in the Union more distracted and afflicted with political and religious dissensions. An extremely rancorous and bitter spirit prevails, that causes great unhappiness, as it commits many wrongs. We have many institutions of professed piety and charity. But I fear their influence, as they are employed in many instances, serves more to destroy than promote the interests of true virtue and religion.

It is a cause of deep regret to every friend to his country that a spirit of disunion and of opposition to the general government has brought already so much ill success and disgrace. It emboldens the traitor when he sees a numerous class of his fellow-citizens ready to welcome him to their bosoms. The soldier's bravery sinks, when discountenanced and betrayed by his own countrymen.

The people constitute the nerves and the strong arms of the government. The strongest arm of the Union is palsied by disaffection or turned to fight even against its own body. Our enemy and the savage tribes are combined in a common league, and had caused American blood to flow, long before the declaration of war. The prospect of taking advantage of our divisions has raised the courage and roused the malice of our adversaries. Our country is engaged with a foe who abandons humanity, and

the most sacred laws of war among civilized nations. That such depravity reigns in the hearts of human beings, and even in those who boast of being civilized and christianized, is a most humiliating and melancholy thought.

It is a subject of deepest humiliation to every heart that loves the cause of Christ, that a nation of high boasted pretensions to religion, should countenance every species of injustice, oppression, and cruelty. Such conduct does not in fact injure or destroy the real merits of christianity, but it is taken, by those who reason superficially, as an occasion to reproach religion. That kind of religion which wears on its front the emblems of malignant and haughty pride, of deception and piracy, of wanton barbarity, and of every crime that can blacken the catalogue of human depravity ; that kind of religion is to be execrated unspeakably more than avowed infidelity. Hypocrisy, and not christianity, is chargeable with this enormous guilt, whose countenance bears all the marks that can excite horror. But this character belongs rather to the government than to the people of Great Britain, because the government tolerate or do not punish the crimes I have mentioned. Yet there is no other way to correct the government of that nation than by chastising its subjects.

Great exertions have been made to alienate the people of this country from their government by inculcating the idea that there is no justifiable cause

for the present war. If I believed this I should deeply deplore the war, and blame those who had waged it. The question is very important to the country and to every individual, especially to those who are in stations of responsibility. If I could have any doubts upon the subject, I would say nothing about it. But impressed as I am that the welfare of the country is at stake, that my own safety and happiness are as much concerned as those of any other man, and that I am equally bound with others to maintain the rights that God has been pleased to grant me, I am impelled by a sense of duty to express my mind on this occasion. I therefore justify my country in the war, for the following reasons.

We have, as a nation, suffered great wrong from the enemy for a number of years, and have with great patience and forbearance laboured to persuade the enemy to cease from violating our rights. But instead of yielding to our entreaties and remonstrances, they have multiplied their aggressions, until no prospect of their termination remained.

The wrongs they have committed have been the most outrageous. To persist in taking unjustly from a nation their property, is universally allowed to be justifiable cause of war. But to tear the citizens from their peaceable employment, and to carry them into captivity and slavery, to groan under the lash of tyrants, to be subject to every species of cruelty to force them to abandon their own country, to

be compelled to fight against their brethren, and to be liable to suffer death to avoid a service to which they never freely consented, and which, being born free, they can never cease to hate, these are enormities which I cannot consent that my fellow-citizens should suffer.

As christians, as friends to the rights of mankind, of humanity, and of every thing sacred, we cannot endure such things.

The conduct of many speaks this language; that the rights of seamen are not worth contending for. How came they to be doomed to a lower and more wretched grade than the rest of the human race? Upon what principles of religion and humanity are they to be abandoned by their country, to fall sacrifices to the rapacity of foreign nations? All christians, and christian ministers especially, ought to be friends to the rights of every class of the people. I will plead for those who are now in slavery, whose bondage prevents them from visiting their native shores to lay their complaints before their friends and the government who owes them emancipation. In their present situation they have no hopes either for this world or for the world to come. They are beyond the reach of all consolation, unless God is pleased in his mercy to wrest them by death from the chains of their oppressors.

How can we be christians or friends of humanity, and not plead and contend for their cause? I am

ready to say in the words of Christ on another occasion, "*He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.*"

It is cause for deep humiliation that so many thousands who have as much right to protection as ourselves, have been forced into slavery and hopeless ruin, and that there are so many who are consenting to the sin. Had we been united in support of the government, these evils would not have existed. Foreign nations ever were and will be ready to take advantage of our divisions. They will try every machination to kindle among us a civil war, and to establish here their own power. Finding that a great portion of the people will not sacrifice their present private interests for the cause of justice, for the rights of a class of our citizens, they will persist in their wicked practises, and the evils of which we complain will be likely to be prolonged and aggravated. These are judgments which threaten us for our divided state as a nation.

Though we have some causes for humiliation this day, we are in the possession and enjoyment of numerous blessings which call us to adore eternal Providence. There are very few if any in our country who cannot obtain a comfortable subsistence. There are none whose blessings do not very far exceed their duties. As a Nation, as a State, as individuals, we have heretofore been generally blest with an uncommon share of prosperity. We have enjoyed

a heritage eminently worthy to be called the heritage of the servants of the Lord. We have been fed with bread, and with every kind of luxury to the full. We have had eminent advantages to acquire knowledge for a number of years ; we have had the aid of religious institutions ; our liberties at home and our rights of conscience have been exercised with great freedom.

And may it not be a serious question whether our prosperity has not been too great to be continued, lest we should be led into such excesses as are inconsistent with the political health of the nation, and are dangerous to all the obligations of piety and virtue ? We have reason to lament the propensity of our nature to degeneracy, which forbids the enjoyment of the unbounded goodness of God. Let us this day review our conduct as individuals, and consider wherein we have erred in using the blessings of providence, and the advantages and liberties with which we have been favored. This is a favorable opportunity to commence a reformation, that will be unspeakably happy to our friends and glorious to ourselves.

Let us this day review our conduct as citizens, and consider the principles on which we have acted. Has it been our motive to maintain the rights of those citizens who are held in slavery and to procure their redemption, and to cause the rights of property to be respected on the ocean, or have we been governed by selfishness, by the cravings of avarice ?

That must be a hard and wretched heart that will voluntarily consent to the slavery of thousands of his fellow-citizens, and to the ruin of the property of ten times as many more, rather than bear the reduction of his own gains for a few years. The people to whom I have the happiness to speak, with joy I trust are not of this description.

If such unanimity pervaded the whole nation, soon would the wretched enslaved Americans escape from their bondage, and again embrace those friends, from whom they were torn by unrelenting cruelty. To your patriotic and virtuous exertions, my hearers, add your fervent prayers to heaven for your country's salvation, honor, and happiness. Let the brave kindle the latent fire of patriotism derived from their ancestors, and say one to another, "Be of good courage, and let us play the men, for our people and for the cities of our God; and the Lord do that which seemeth him good."

"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord."

This is not to be considered as a promise of God to his people that they should meet no misfortunes, that their enemies should not in any measure injure and afflict them. Such uninterrupted prosperity and undisturbed enjoyment of civil rights and liberties are

not to be expected in our present imperfect state. But the extent of the promise of the text is, No weapon that is formed against you shall so far prosper as to defeat the cause you maintain, and essentially destroy the object of your hopes.

Although our country has experienced some adverse events, in a general view her cause stands unmoved. In one instance it appears that the government were deceived, and had misplaced their confidence in a commander of an important station. But there has been no evidence of want of bravery in the troops. The government have not had the means afforded them to raise an army sufficient to accomplish any important object. The resources of the country have not yet been called into action. The strength of the nation has not yet been tried. It appears to have been the general expectation, till lately, especially of the government, that our greatest exertions would be unnecessary, and they have still been proposing measures of peace. On the land, the weapon formed against us has given the country some mortifying wounds, but perhaps no more than was necessary to rouse the spirit of the people into its native majesty.

On the sea, the success of our cause has exceeded the highest expectations of the most sanguine.

The heroes of the most splendid fame seldom if ever won prouder laurels. Whilst they have dealt destruction on the enemy, Omnipotence has

been their shield. The weapon of the enemy has not been permitted to prosper.

Some of our defenceless citizens have met the calamities unavoidably incident to a state of war ; but the advantage is greatly on the side of our country, as it relates to the maritime warfare. Providence has displayed very signal and remarkable interpositions in our favor, where they were generally least expected. No defeats could have been so humiliating to the enemy as those they have met on the ocean. Their power there is the dread of nations, and the scourge of the world. Their proudest weapon has been repeatedly broken. "The right hand of the Lord is exalted ; the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly." "They compass us about like bees ; they shall be quenched as the fire of thorns : for in the name of the Lord we will destroy them.\*"

From the nature of the cause in which the nation is engaged, I have confidence that no weapon formed against us will be permitted to prosper. The government have lately provided means to prosecute measures, which I trust will be severely felt by the enemy, or will convince them, that the contested point will not be yielded. It being not for an increase of power, not to oppress mankind, but to secure **THE RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES OF OUR BRETHREN ON THE OCEAN**, that we contend,

\* Psalm cxviii. 12.

we have much reason to hope that heaven will prosper our cause. It is in the defence of essential rights that we are engaged, or in vain should we look for success.

But success is not to be expected without duty. The government must be faithful to theirs, and the citizens must be faithful to theirs. They must act in concert, or the hopes of both are lost.

Can we better improve a few moments than in inquiring what duties the state of our public affairs demands of the people? If the cause, in which the nation is engaged, be a righteous cause, success is not to be expected, unless the citizens are faithful to their duty.

No government can succeed well without the support of the citizens. The administration of government requires great talents, great industry and fidelity in a time of peace. But it is much more arduous in a time of war. Let those who find fault with the government consider the embarrassments arising from opposition. Let heads of families consider the difficulty of managing their affairs well, when they are perplexed with refractory members. Can the house builder succeed well, when his employer does not afford necessary materials, and when he is continually thwarting his plans, and obstructing the work in its progress? What artificer can execute a work well, when unfaithful and disaffected persons are continually disobeying his directions? Who

can navigate a ship across the tempestuous ocean, unless his orders are punctually obeyed by the crew? Who can administer the government with the best success, when its laws are continually violated, and its plans are frustrated? Let all the citizens aid the measures of the general government, and let the correctness of them be proved by experiment. If then they fail, place others at the helm. Those who act in opposition to the general government not only embarrass the rulers, but they act against their own interest, because all obstructions are prolonging the contest. I think this nation never will yield the great point for which they are now contending. If some of the States are arrayed in opposition to the government, this will only cause greater delay, expense, and misfortune to a considerable portion of the citizens, and not ultimately answer any valuable purpose to the country.

Therefore the duty of the good citizen seems to be this. Though the general administration be not of his choice, he observes all the laws, he aids in the execution of their plans, to try the virtue of them, and if they prove erroneous, he has a constitutional remedy. This appears to me the only course that a truly christian patriot can consistently pursue. It is my firm belief that it is the duty of every good citizen to yield to the will of the people, as decided by a majority throughout the Union, so far as relates to

the complete execution of all the laws made by their Representatives.

The providence of God has kindly placed us under a government far the happiest in the world. We know nothing about the public calamities which other nations experience. We are not crowned with so many great and precious blessings without owing correspondent duties towards God and our country. The promise that no weapon formed against us shall prosper, cannot be considered applicable to us any further than we are faithful to the principles and conditions on which it was granted. No great attainment is to be expected without duty and perhaps great sacrifices.

All classes of honest people with whom I am acquainted ardently desire an honorable peace. But how is this to be obtained? By opposition to the general government? If they are defeated in their exertions, we must take such a peace as the enemy with the savage tribes are pleased to give us. Must we abandon the essential principles of justice to obtain peace? Yielding in one or two points will not satisfy our enemies. There will be no end to their demands until we have made an unconditional surrender of all that we hold dear and sacred. More nations than one will be claiming a share in the spoils, and our doom must be wretched beyond all conception. No, I trust the general principles and at-

tachments of the people of this country are not yet become so degenerate, so lost to all sacred obligations, as to abandon her cause.

The claims of the government are so just and reasonable, that I cannot resist the hope that they will be allowed, and that a termination of hostilities is not far distant. Such an era would be happy, and would be an occasion for the most thankful acknowledgments to the supreme Arbiter of events. Should not this hope be soon realized, I think we have much reason to believe that for a year to come the conflict will be very severe. In this last alternative may we strengthen each other's hands and encourage each other's hearts.

Surely if we look back to the means which this people possessed in the revolution, to defend and maintain their rights, and are faithful to ourselves, we cannot doubt as to the result, unless we are abandoned of heaven for our wickedness. There is no want in this country of resources of strength, of talents, or of bravery, to defeat our enemies. There is no want, but of virtue and patriotism.

There is one class of people whose thirst is so great to get the reins of power into their own hands, that they inwardly rejoice in every calamity that tends to produce a change of public opinion in their favor. This class is numerous, and their influence is great. They deceive many.

There is another class who are so much devoted to the god of avarice, that they are impatient under any state of things that interferes with their immediate interest. Had the generation who are now principally gone off the stage of action, been of this description, this country would now have been involved in all the wars and calamities of Europe. The true and honest patriot will be ready to sacrifice his personal interest for the security of the rights of his country and of his posterity. Our fathers were careful and faithful to see that we should be born free, and if we have not sufficient virtue to maintain our birth-right, no ignominy can be too great for us.

There is another class of people who do not think for themselves, but give themselves to the guidance of those who will make merchandize of them. If there were any of these classes within the reach of my voice, I would conjure them by all that is sacred, to lay aside, as far as possible, all private interests and motives of ambition, for the good of their country, for the benefit of posterity.

There is still another class of people opposed to the war, because they consider it a great calamity ; and from benevolent feelings they dread the consequences. But I would ask them to extend their benevolent feelings towards the many thousands who have been for years past, and still are in a condition the most deplorable. If they are not rescued, and the evil is not removed, many thousands more must

meet the same fate. Many have lost their health, their limbs, and their lives. Many have been disabled and reduced, and then abandoned to despair. Many are robbed of their service during a number of the best years of life, and their families are left to bewail their unhappy doom.

We have no right for the sake of peace to leave them to such sufferings of injustice and cruelty. It is inhumanity ; it is cruelty the most deliberate. If we consent to the violence done to our fellow-citizens, when we have power to bring their oppressors to justice, we become partakers in the guilt of man-stealing, and merit the execration of the unhappy sufferers, and the indignation of the Almighty.

When the **Byrians** and **Zidonians** had abused the liberties of the Jews, when they had disposed of them by lot, when they had given a Jewish boy for the hire of a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink to excess, God declared against them by the prophet Joel the most tremendous judgments. These wrongs were afterwards avenged against the **Byrians**, for Alexander sold thirty thousand of them for slaves. Not only the nations who abuse our citizens and enslave them will be punished, but they who justify them will partake of the awful retribution of God. Therefore may we not be accessory, in any way, to continue or to justify the wrongs which are committed upon our own citizens.

Finally, Let it be our hearts desire and prayer to God "that He would preserve us, in the course of

the ensuing year, from domestic violence and foreign invasion ; from scarcity of bread ; from contagious sickness and untimely death—That He would prosper the means of education, and that His eyes may be upon us for good from the beginning to the end of the year—That the Heavens may give their dew, and the earth yield her increase ; and that God, even our God, may bless us.”

May you steadily pursue such a course of conduct, in your several callings as will best serve the cause of your common country. Do not be carried away from your duty by the slight and cunning craftiness of men, but with unprejudiced minds inquire devoutly before God, What is right ?

On this occasion I felt it to be my duty to express my sentiments on some important points with plainness, that you may not err through the want of honesty and fidelity on my part. My most earnest concern is to strengthen and confirm your resolutions to do your duty towards God, your country, your families, and yourselves. But whatever sentiments you entertain, indulge no bitterness, and deny not to others the right of opinion. Be strong in understanding, and firm in heart, but not malicious or unfair. Should any of you be called to take a more active part in the cause of your country, go not in your own strength alone, but in the power of the Lord of hosts. “Be strong and of a good courage. And the Lord, he it is that doth go before

you ; he will be with you, he will not fail you, neither forsake you : fear not neither be dismayed."

If the blessings of peace should be denied us, may not the blessings of plenty be withheld. Let us be faithful and humble in our duty, and may the joyful hopes of salvation through the Redeemer, support us in every trial, which infinite wisdom sees fit to appoint, until the season of our probation be passed away, and our spirits may be permitted to join the choir of celestial beings in raptures of everlasting love and praise. May our prayers this day for the salvation of our beloved country be answered with the blessings of honorable peace and perpetual prosperity.

But if the hearts of our enemies should continue to be hardened, to be filled with the gall of bitterness, and to glory in the bonds of iniquity, I exhort you by the blood of those immortal patriots who sacrificed their lives on the altar of their country to purchase your liberty, and whom heaven, we trust, has crowned with glory for their fidelity, to be true to the same principles.

If the cause be lost in which the country is now engaged, this rising nation with the fairest, brightest prospects, I fear will become the ignominious prey of foreigners, the contempt of the world, and the outcast of heaven. Let us deplore that weakness, that instability, that depravity of the human character

through which men are enticed by corrupt influence, by foreign partialities of any kind to sacrifice their country's honor and felicity.

Let your patriotism be founded in an unshaken love and confidence towards the great, the immutable JEHOVAH, and in the principles of divine rectitude ; and may your conduct in the present contest for your country's independence be worthy to be held in everlasting remembrance.











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